

Fathering

Jim Walker

When I first hold our children,
Lately having labored alongside you,
I promised many things — too many —
Like the alcoholic too late repentant,
Willing to stay dry throughout eternities
Till, aching across afternoon,
Thirst slides through an unlocked window.

I count my failings like papaya seeds.
I do not want to overbear,
shouting down corridors of closed doors.
No, I would have them race into my arms,
Exchange intimacies.
Instead I dictate, order, punish.

Watching whiteflies flit among green fronds,
I wonder at the haste of days
(Their growing, our graying),
And in the tick of time, dread severance.

JAMES RUSSELL WALKER received his Ph.D. in English at Southern Illinois University, taught at the University of Winnipeg, and is now in his seventh year at BYU-Hawaii where he is chairman of the Language and Communications Department. The father of six children, he is also bishop of a student ward.